

Appendix: Year 1 Final Report

The Shifting Gears programme was expanded over winter relative to our original plan as we identified a need for continued winter cycling and maintenance activities.

This appendix to our mid-year evaluation sets out our final end of year figures for 2021/22, as well as our winter activities and their impacts, providing a view of the project's first full year and the lessons we will build into the second year of operation.

"Since I got my bike I haven't used the car"



Year 1 final figures*

In our first year we delivered:

147 bikes to participants referred by our partner organisations.

296 cycling or related sessions comprising one-to-one lessons, group lessons, group rides and route planning sessions with 411 attendees (80 unique participants).

78 attendees (34 unique participants) at our maintenance workshops

4 part time Assistant Mechanic posts lasting 6 months each

1 Assistant Mechanic recruited as full time Refurbishment Mechanic

92%

of participants are still cycling, with over 45% doing so at least once a week*.

43%

of participants say they are more able to get around by bike instead of walking / public transport / driving*

Who we worked with:



40% under 25



65% ethnic minorities



56% women & non-binary

"Learning how to cycle and getting better at it was one of my highlights of 2021. I can't wait to become an expert in the New Year!"

- Participant feedback

*Based on responses from 28 participants to the end of year survey.

Workshop Totals

Cycling Workshops- Participant Numbers

	Summer (unique)	Winter (unique)	Total (unique)
Perth	127 (26)	93 (13)	220 (39)
Edinburgh	106 (26)	85 (24)	191 (50)
Total	233 (52)	178 (37)	411 (89)

Maintenance Workshops- Participant Numbers

	Summer (unique)	Winter (unique)	Total (unique)
Perth	35 (13)	25 (12)	42 (25)
Edinburgh	18 (12)	18 (10)	36 (22)
Total	53 (25)	43 (22)	78 (47)



"The Velotech course was awesome! I really enjoyed it and everyone there was great and helpful" -Participant feedback

The difference we have made over winter



We supported Shifting Gears participants to cycle through the winter months with provision of winter kit and a varied programme of activities:

127 items of winter riding clothing and 42 accessories distributed

83 1-to-1 local cycling workshops

36 social activities including group rides, autistic friendly rides, family rides and route planning sessions with 77 attendances

30 winter maintenance activities including 1-to-1 workshops, winter tune up sessions and 'Thrills and Skills' workshops with 35 attendances

9 Velotech qualifications awarded (8 Bronze, 1 Silver)



Evaluation Themes

Freedom, Safety Confidence, Enjoyment, Learning

"I love having a bike. It gives me freedom, it helps me mentally to forget my worries, the stress, and the anxiety. I went to the Winter Wonderland using my bike and it's somewhere I would never usually venture out to, but I really felt in control." - Participant feedback

"I thoroughly enjoyed the Dunkeld cycle and the lovely weather was a bonus. Rosie was very informative re. the route which all added to the experience as did the lovely coffee stop." Participant feedback

"Two of the young people on the autistic-friendly ride last night got on like a house on fire - one apparently takes a while to talk to people but they really clicked and had a great time talking about films and getting into the detail of costume design. They also all really enjoyed the slow race and took it really seriously, concentrating hard. [Participant] can now ride looking over his shoulder." Cycle Trainer Observation

"One younger girl experiencing domestic abuse from a family member was really struggling emotionally and didn't have anyone to talk to. Having the bike has enabled her to get out more, get some fresh air and take things off her mind" Partner feedback

[Participant] was very nervous about using public transport and would avoid the city centre because she didn't want to be seen by her ex. She has started going out more since getting a bike. Cycling means that she can turn around at any point if she feels that she is in danger or could be seen, without a bike it might have taken another 10 months or more to get her back to using public transport. It has also helped her financially by reducing her outgoings and keeping her mobile." Partner feedback

[Participant] has very much enjoyed having access to a bike. Using it has allowed her to become more confident (on the bike and overall) and has helped her work towards her goal of becoming more active and healthier. ... Additionally, spending time with the instructor gave her the opportunity to make a new connection, which she tends to avoid doing. Greig's support and enthusiasm helped a lot in encouraging [participant] to realise her potential and she and I both noticed a difference in her self-esteem" Partner feedback



Emmanuel joined the Shifting Gears programme with his wife and two children through the charity SCOREscotland.

They were always an active family, walking for many of their daily journeys, but they were not familiar with cycling. Since receiving bikes from The Bike Station, they have felt a new degree of freedom - "We weren't cycling before this, now we feel a level of freedom and joy at being able to cycle around and do all of the things that we have been doing."

Regular attendees at sessions with our cycle trainer - Gerry - they were soon confident enough to make their own journeys

. They now ride most evenings as a family to bond and get exercise, explore their local area and cycle for

journeys that they would previously have made on foot or by bus: "We have been doing lots of riding both for fun, bonding, and to run errands...my son actually rides to school and back every day."

Emmanuel and his family experienced many important benefits from learning to cycle, key amongst which for them were the savings in both time and money that come with travelling by bike: "It saves money by not taking the bus, it is much much faster to cycle than to walk... What would take you 15 minutes to cycle would maybe take you 30 minutes to walk."

They have also found that cycling has had a positive impact on their wellbeing, both physically and mentally

"The fun of cycling itself is a motivation in itself to get out. There are many physical

gains from cycling as well as psychological gains. You are quite happy when you are cycling."

Travelling by bike has allowed the family to discover new places and learn more about their neighbourhood: "So [cycling] gives you the opportunity to know more routes and areas. When you travel on the bus you don't have the opportunity to stop and explore but with a bike you can stop at any point in time and see the area."

Cycling is now Emmanuel's preferred mode of transport, having replaced driving or taking the bus: "I now cycle regularly rather than deciding to go with the car or entering into buses... If you gave me the option to walk or cycle, I would definitely choose to cycle because it is much more fun and faster."

Sophie joined Shifting Gears in February 2022, through a referral from Perth Autism Support.

At this time she was just starting to participate in new activities, after a period out of school due to issues with anxiety and panic attacks. Although she was already a competent cyclist, starting 1 to 1 cycling sessions was a big step as she had found activities such as leaving the house, going somewhere alone or catching a bus very challenging.

Her involvement in the programme has been a success due to the strong relationship she has developed with her cycle trainer, Rosie. Sophie found Rosie approachable and easy to talk to straight away and although she had wanted her dad to ride with her for the first time, he soon no longer needed to be there. Now she's happy to come to the Bike Station alone and chat to other staff.

The rides have changed Sophie's attitude to cycling - while she had ridden a lot alone before, she now likes the social aspect of chatting



CASE STUDY

Perth

on rides and trying new things - such as learning to ride on urban roads and especially going into the forest to try mountain biking: "I wouldn't have thought of doing it before, it seemed a bit dangerous at the start but then I enjoyed it". In future she would like to join group rides and has started building up her confidence to do this by sharing 1 to 1 sessions with another Shifting Gears participant.

One of the key impacts of participating is that she's discovered exercise doesn't have to mean competitive team sports. It's been invaluable to have the opportunity to get exercise and all its benefits in a totally different way, that's about

going at your own pace and having fun, instead of being about competition and maximum exertion.

She has also taken 1 to 1 maintenance classes and is confident to repair punctures and adjust gears. The sessions were tailored to her creative skills in art and design: "I liked learning about the maintenance but what I liked most was the upcycled art from bike parts - making a dream catcher from a wheel and decorations using sprockets and chain sections." Upcycling bike parts has opened up a new range of materials and tools for her to work with.

As a result of connections made through Rosie, Sophie is

now starting two work experience placements which are directly related to her interests - one will involve graphic design, at the other she will train as a barista. Following an initial introduction meeting with Rosie, Sophie has a start date and is planning to commute by bus. This is not something she would have considered six months ago, demonstrating how Shifting Gears has contributed to the huge progress she and her family have seen in her confidence and ability to take up new opportunities.

Our Assistant Mechanics' Journeys

The assistant mechanics who joined us in November through Shifting Gears are now almost at the end of their placements, which were extended to 6 months. We are incredibly proud of their progress:



57 bikes built

3 currently qualified to Velotech Silver, 1 to Velotech Gold

1 of our assistant mechanics has now taken a full time position as a refurbishment mechanic in Edinburgh, and another has applied to work with our office team.

Huge development in personal/transferable skills including dealing with customers, understanding their needs from an employer and recognising their own potential

Evaluation

A focus group evaluation was used to identify key themes from individuals' experience of the role and learning points which will be applied to the employability element of next year's programme. Findings below:

Personal development



“we’ve all gained more than the skills to be a mechanic”

All four gave multiple instances of gaining skills, knowledge and experience through the role; not just in how to build bikes to a safe, professional standard and cycling, but in other transferable skills. These included becoming more able to focus on tasks, time management, socialising at work, customer service and how to mentor others, through being mentored effectively.

There was also a strong theme of everyone gaining confidence in their own skills and abilities, and pride in what they have achieved in a relatively short time; “It’s incredible how far I’ve come”. Three of the four discussed wider impacts of the role in their personal lives:

“Without this job, I would be sitting around doing nothing.”

“My motivation is to say to my children you can do anything, coming from my finance background, to working in a bike shop, you can do anything. It’s a lot for me, more than just an apprentice job.”

“When I started I didn’t know what the parts were called, I didn’t know anything about bikes, I wasn’t interested in bikes, I wasn’t into cycling. I just thought it was a job opportunity, let’s give it a go. This [programme] is what got me off my couch playing video games into cycling up to 80km a week. Now I know what the parts are, what they’re called, how to identify if they’re good quality, if they’re working and safe to ride. Now I could look at a bike, think what parts it would need, how to build it up - I can do bike mechanics! It’s the first thing I can do that’s not a commonly held skill.”



Conditions for development



"From the very first time I stepped foot in the shop I had a sense it would be a good workplace."

The working environment and support were key to the assistant mechanics' progress, job satisfaction and achievements. Factors enabling their success included:

- Adaptable interview arrangements - allowed to bring children
- Smooth induction - with achievable tasks set at the beginning
- Support from mentors - patient and approachable
- Having a partner - two assistant mechanics started at the same time in each branch
- Effective team working with other shop staff
- Variety of tasks they were able to engage in
- Freedom to pursue their interests
- Good workplace atmosphere - "chilled and relaxed"

Career impacts and aspirations



"it has impacted the direction of my career significantly"

All agreed the role has had a significant impact on their future careers and changed their ambitions. The importance of the job being open to those without prior experience was highlighted: "it's rare to find a job that starts you off into a career" with two saying the fact it was an employment opportunity was initially more important than the actual job.

All now have "a platform from which to acquire other jobs". One has already gained a full time mechanic post at The Bike Station, another has chosen to take a car mechanics course at college

as a direct result of his growing interest in mechanics. All feel confident they would now have a foot in the door for other bike related jobs, and would like to continue their relationship with The Bike Station.

They also found the experience has given them a better understanding of what they want from a job, what a good workplace environment feels like, and also of their own potential:

"I will now look at other job applications differently, when you look at the list of skills required, if I don't have a skill I can still apply, because if I can learn how to perform well in this job then I can do that elsewhere."

Changing attitudes to cycling



"doing bike maintenance makes you want to see what the fuss is about riding bikes"

Cycling frequency increased for all, and now varies from once a week to most days, including for commuting. Two of the four have learned to ride through Shifting Gears and three agreed they had gained a new interest in cycling as a result of the job. The only barrier to more cycling was lack of free time.

"I went from not cycling since childhood, to cycling pretty much every day. I cycle to work, cycle to the shops, cycle between mum and dad's houses. I already have two bikes, one scrappier bike for leaving places, and a better one for other days. I have been learning mountain biking, and exploring the hills nearby. My main hobby is now cycling. My goal for the summer is to cycle 100km in a day. It is a whole lifestyle change."

"Now that I work somewhere where there's a safe place to keep my bike, I cycle to work everyday. And I keep my bike in better condition, it needs more work on it because I use it more. I used to cycle just for fun and shopping etc. maybe once or twice a week"

"It has definitely changed the way I feel about cycling. I wouldn't really have considered it before but now I think about it a lot. I've been trying to persuade my mum to buy a bike and get her and my brother into cycling. I've got a greater respect for cyclists now as well."

"I can't imagine my life without cycling now. I really want to improve and in a couple of years I hope I will be as adventurous as the others with my journeys"

Key Learning Points

Taking a genuinely person-centred approach

Shifting Gears is a programme that is highly driven by participants' individual needs and interests. 1 to 1 cycling, maintenance sessions and group rides all start with a check in to assess participants' mood, motivation and circumstances, with sessions tailored as a result. As shown by feedback and case studies, this approach of meeting people where they are and responding to individual needs is highly effective; enabling us to deliver much more than building cycling and maintenance skills. We will continue to develop this approach, supporting staff with training e.g. in trauma awareness.

Acting on feedback

Following feedback from participants we introduced new activities including family rides and workshops (Edinburgh) and "on location" rides (Perth) starting outside the city but accessible by car and public transport, with the option to have your bike taken to the start. Subsidised coffee stops introduced over winter were valued by participants for the chance to warm up, use toilet facilities and enjoy a hot drink most would otherwise not have been able to afford, and socialise off the bikes. We will continue to seek and act on feedback.

Focus on reaching those who can benefit most

Winter can be a difficult time for many people, particularly so for some of our target audience e.g. a support worker for unaccompanied asylum seeking children told us all find winter hard, especially their first winter. The weather and light conditions during the winter months are also generally unappealing to novice cyclists. This makes participation in activities more challenging. In future we would adjust our expectations for participation in winter events and activities and focus our resources on those participants who do wish to continue through the season.

Developing the Shifting Gears employability programme

The assistant mechanic opportunity has had considerable impacts on employability, in its broadest sense, for all four 2021 participants. We would seek to replicate the success factors identified by participants this year. Areas noted for improvement include more frequent communication during the application process, co-development of individual goals/targets as appropriate at the start of the placement, more structured opportunities to gain experience in different aspects of the business, and giving more information in the role advert about the potential for its scope to extend beyond bike refurbishing.

We will also provide a 'starter toolkit' for new assistant mechanics. Separately we have identified demand for volunteering opportunities which offer potential to gain similar employability benefits, but with a lower and less formal commitment requirement, which is also accessible to those who do not have the right to work in the UK. We will trial this as a route to encourage more applications for the assistant mechanic role in 2022/23.

Using evidence to encourage participation

We have observed highly significant impacts for a relatively small proportion of the total number of participants. Many of those who initially expressed interest in cycling / maintenance activities have not gone on to engage, despite repeated communications. Partner feedback suggests that in some cases this may be due to anxiety, and may also be a result of the groups we are seeking to work with who often have other, competing, priorities in their lives. In the coming year we will seek to make more use of our photo, video and qualitative evidence base to help potential participants understand what is involved and continue working to identify and address individuals' barriers.

The incentive model for kit distribution needs refinement

We used an incentive model to distribute winter kit which allowed participants to earn clothing and equipment by participating in a set number of activities. End of year evaluation showed this did not reach all participants who could have benefited i.e. those who would have continued to ride over winter with better kit but who do not have a need to join activities. Going forward we would refine this model to allow these individuals to benefit.